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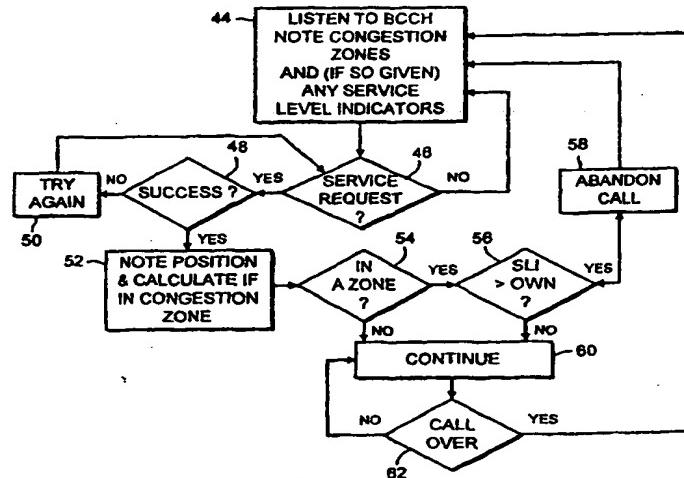
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(71) Applicant (<i>for all designated States except US</i>): ICO SERVICES LTD. [GB/GB]; 1 Queen Caroline Street, London W6 9BN (GB).		
(72) Inventor; and		
(75) Inventor/Applicant (<i>for US only</i>): LU, Sze-ching [GB/GB]; 113 St. James Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 2TJ (GB).		
(74) Agents: WOODWARD, John, Calvin et al.; Venner, Shipley & Co., 20 Little Britain, London EC1A 7DH (GB).		

(54) Title: ZONAL CONGESTION CONTROL



(57) Abstract

A satellite communications system (34, 36, 10) where a communications satellite (10) provides a plurality of spot beams (30), controlled by an earth station (36), to communicate with user terminals (34) on the surface of the earth (14), has the earth station (36) divide its part of the surface of the earth into zones (38), the earth station finding the position of each interactive user terminal (34) on the surface of the earth (14) and informing the user terminal in which zone it lies. The earth station (36) logs the calls from each zone (38) and establishes if call congestion is occurring in any zone (38), or for other reasons. When congestion occurs, the earth station (36) issues indication to each user terminal of the identity or identities of that zone or those zones where congestion arises. If inside a zone where congestion arises, and a service level indicator, provided by the earth station (36), exceeds that allocated to the user terminal (34), the user terminal (34) shuts down until it receives a service level indicator allowing it to function. The earth station (36) continually adjusts the service level indicator to keep the congestion situation just suppressed.